

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 IO-14 PC-04 SAM-01 SAJ-01

SIL-01 LAB-06 EB-11 COME-00 OPR-02 OMB-01 AID-20

SCA-01 OC-06 CCO-00 DRC-01 SY-10 /157 W

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O 070905Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2537

SECDEF IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0148

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, ET

SUBJECT: CURRENT SITUATION

1. IN TELCON LAST NIGHT WITH MAJOR GENERAL GASHAW KEBEDE, COMMISSIONER OF ERITREAN POLICE, HE ASSURED ME THAT HE WAS IN EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF POLICE, THAT HE HAD ADEQUATE FORCES DEPLOYED IN LIGHT OF UNCERTAINTIES OF DEVELOPING STRIKE, AND THAT HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE ANY SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN MAINTAINING ORDER IN ASMARA. HE SOUNDED RELAXED AND CONFIDENT.

2. SITUATION THIS MORNING IS CALM, WITH SOME WORKERS ABSENT ON STRIKE AND OTHERS AT WORK. I HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT LARGE, WELL ORGANIZED UNIONS ARE ON STRIKE BUT IN ORDERLY AND UNEMOTIONAL MANNER, AT LARGE FACTORIES INCLUDING COTTON AND BEER FACTORIES (BOTH OWNED BY WEALTHY ITALIANS). SOME SMALL FACTORIES ARE REPORTEDLY WORKING, AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE SO FAR OF ANY AGITATION. APPRO-
PRIATED FUND WORKERS AT KAGNEW STATION DID APPEAR FOR
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WORK AS USUAL THIS MORNING. SHOPS, GASOLINE STATIONS,

AND SIMILAR BUSINESSES ARE OPEN. SEVERAL TECHNICAL WORKERS FROM IEG TELECOMMUNICATIONS BOARD APPEARED AS SCHEDULED AT CONSULATE GENERAL TO PERFORM SPECIALIZED COMMUNICATIONS WORK. BANKS ARE CLOSED, WITH POLICE PROTECTION, REFLECTING NOT ONLY EFFECTIVE BANK WORKERS UNION BUT PROBABLY ALSO MANAGERIAL PRUDENCE AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS. ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES, ALSO WITH A WELL ORGANIZED UNION, IS REPORTEDLY ON STRIKE BUT DURATION INTENDED IS NOT KNOWN BY MANAGEMENT OR WORKERS HERE. MAC C-141 WHICH LANDED HERE YESTERDAY WITH DEFECTIVE OIL LINE EN ROUTE FROM ADDIS TO TURKEY IS BEING REPAIRED WITH EXPECTATION THAT DEPARTURE MAY BE POSSIBLE WITHIN NEXT FEW HOURS IF REPAIRS ARE COMPLETED AND IF FLIGHT CLEARANCE IS OBTAINED (AS EXPECTED).

3. CONGEN HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT SITUATION AT MASSAWA ALSO IS CALM THOUGH PORT WORKERS REPORTEDLY ARE ON STRIKE WITH PORT TEMPORARILY CLOSED. IMPORTANT EXCEPTION IS CONTINUED UNLOADING AND PROCESSING OF EMERGENCY RELIEF GRAIN SHIPMENTS. CONGEN HEARD YESTERDAY THAT 13 NAVAL OFFICERS WHOSE REMOVAL WAS BEING DEMANDED BY ENLISTED PERSONNEL HAD VOLUNTARILY RESIGNED THEIR COMMISSIONS AND HAD BEEN MOVED (NOT KNOWN WHETHER VOLUNTARILY OR INVOLUNTARILY) FROM MASSAWA TO IEN MARINE TRAINING STATION AT EMBATCALA. CONGEN ALSO HAS HEARD THIS MORNING THAT ADMIRAL DESTA IS STILL AT DJIBOUTI BUT THAT HE INTENDED TO PROCEED TO ADDIS ABABA TODAY OR TOMORROW. THIS IS NOT CONFIRMED.

4. IN REGARD TO ASMARA 142, SECOND AIR GROUP AIRCRAFT ARE STILL AT ASMARA BUT WE UNDERSTAND THEY ARE FUELLED AND PREPARED FOR LAUNCH WITHIN TWO HOURS IF LAUNCH ORDER SHOULD BE ISSUED. AIRCRAFT REPORTEDLY INCLUDE 12 F-86S, 14 T-28AS, 5 T-28DS. WE ALSO HEARD THAT COMMANDER OF SECOND AIR GROUP, BRIGADIER GENERAL YOHANNES WOLDERMARIAM, WHO LEFT ASMARA IN NOVEMBER FOR EXECUTIVE TRAINING COURSE IN CALIFORNIA, HAS BEEN NOMINATED AS DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF OF AIR FORCE AND IS BEING CALLED BACK TO ADDIS ABABA. YOHANNES IS EXCEPTIONALLY CAPABLE OFFICER AND LEADER WITH EXCELLENT PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND NUANCES. IF TRUE HE HAS BEEN APPOINTED DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF OF IEAF, WE BELIEVE HE WILL EXERCISE CONFIDENTIAL

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MOST CONSTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE BOTH IN POLITICAL AND PROFESSIONAL TERMS.

5. LEADERSHIP OF ASMARA BRANCH OF CONFEDERATION OF ETHIOPIAN LABOR UNIONS REPORTEDLY IS MEETING THIS MORNING TO ESTIMATE SITUATION AND TO DETERMINE FURTHER POSITION AND COURSE OF ACTION. IN ABSENCE OF PRESSURES FROM ADDIS ABABA, WE TEND TO BELIEVE THAT LOCAL LABOR LEADERSHIP WILL SEEK TO EXERCISE

RESTRAINT ON BASIS OF PRIME MINISTER'S EXHORTATION LAST NIGHT.
HOWEVER, WHAT MAY HAPPEN IN THIS REGARD PROBABLY WILL DEPEND
MAINLY UPON DECISIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS BY CELU LEADERSHIP AT
ADDIS ABABA.
RABIDA

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